

## WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A vehicle occupant detection apparatus comprising a control apparatus, and at least one load sensor for  
5 generating load data concerning a vehicle seat, said control apparatus comprising  
a processing section for judging vehicle occupant status based upon said load data,  
a power supply section for supplying electrical power  
10 to said processing section, and  
a communication section for transmitting results of said judgement of vehicle occupant status by said processing section to a vehicle occupant protection apparatus;  
15 wherein said load sensor is supplied with electrical power from said power supply section of said control apparatus.

2. A vehicle occupant detection apparatus as claimed in  
20 claim 1, wherein said load sensor produces said load data in the form of an analog voltage signal, and said control apparatus comprises analog-to-digital converter means for converting said analog voltage signal to digital data.

3. A vehicle occupant detection apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein said processing section of said control apparatus performs encoding of said results of said judgement of vehicle occupant status, and wherein resultant  
5 encoded data are transmitted by said communication section to said vehicle occupant protection apparatus.